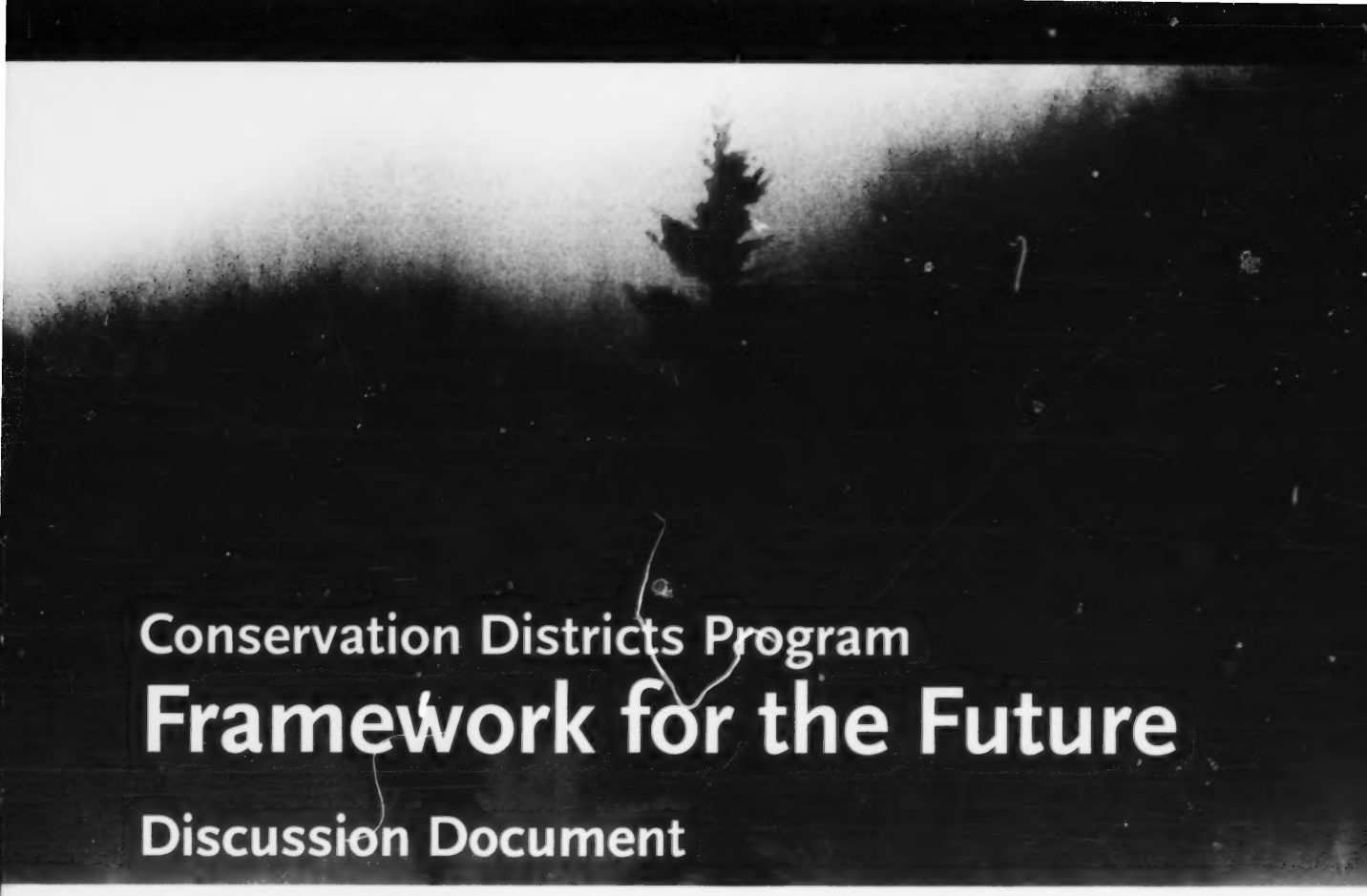


Conservation Districts Program

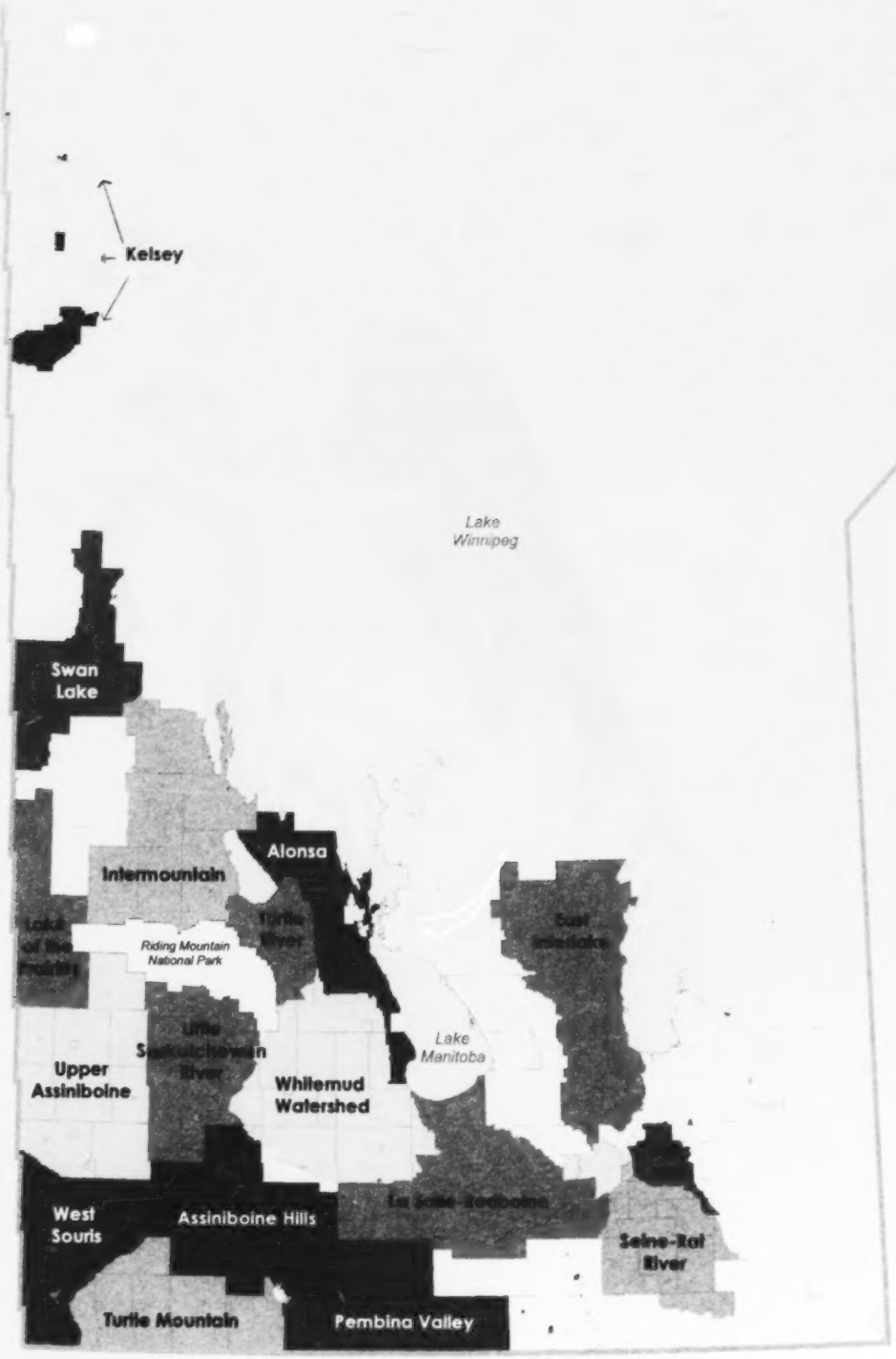
Framework for the Future

Discussion Document

November 2007

Manitoba

Conservation Districts of Manitoba



December 2007

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Background

The Conservation Districts Program operates under the authority of *The Conservation Districts Act* and provides for conservation, control and prudent use of resources by establishing conservation districts in partnerships with the Province of Manitoba and its municipalities. In place since 1976, the act governs conservation district (CD) formation and allows municipalities to collect a levy that supports CD programs. Provincial cost-share funding with conservation districts varies according to current policy.

The Conservation Districts Program now includes 18 CDs, covering 85 per cent of municipal Manitoba. Since 1999, the number of CDs has doubled. An additional three CDs are expected to be formed in the next three years.

The Conservation Districts Commission, established by *The Conservation Districts Act*, develops and applies provincial policies that guide effective delivery of the Conservation Districts Program. The commission is chaired by the deputy minister of Manitoba Water Stewardship and its members include deputy ministers from Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs, Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation and Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives. It also includes representatives from the Manitoba Conservation Districts Association and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Need

The commission has assessed the CD program and identified a need to articulate a clear vision on strategies and priorities for the program over the next 15 to 20 years. The importance of this exercise is reflected by a number of facts:

- The conservation district model has been identified as a preferred model for effective delivery of government water, land and related resource policies and programs.
- In 35 years, the CD program has not changed significantly, despite the fact that stresses on water and land resources have increased substantially.
- *The Water Protection Act* came into force in 2005. It identifies conservation district boards as entities that may be designated as water planning authorities to deliver integrated watershed management planning (IWMP).
- The current expectation that Manitoba should provide three times the funds CDs raise with annual levies is no longer sustainable.
- Provincial funding must be more clearly linked to the measurement of change rather than the number of projects completed.
- Involvement of the CD Commission, conservation districts, Manitoba Conservation Districts Association, First Nations, Manitoba Northern Affairs communities, Association of Manitoba Municipalities, rural communities, and other stakeholders will move the CD program into the future.
- Continued program expansion and new provincial directions have placed a demand for a new mandate, demonstrated support of provincial priorities, broader governance, surface water management, drainage infrastructure partnerships, integration of large urban centres and a new funding formula that is fair and equitable.

Provincial Framework Purpose

The chair of the CD Commission organized three workshops in 2006 that engaged provincial deputy ministers on the commission in discussing the future of the CD program. This framework discussion document is the result – a starting point and a tool for the consultation process to reach stakeholders consensus. It clarifies the vision, mandate, provincial priorities, goals and objectives for the CD program.

The newly defined organizational vision statement for CDs, their mandate, core principles, goals and objectives, all support a new purpose for the CD program – healthy and sustainable watersheds through focused, priority-based funding decisions and measurable results.

The intent of this framework is to focus the work of the CD Commission, local CD boards, municipal governments and program partners, while providing a basis for performance reporting. Creating common goals and objectives will help stakeholders work together and maximize results.

The table included with this document provides a summary on the future direction of the CD program.

Provincial Priorities

- integrated watershed management planning
- source water protection
- healthy ecosystems
- sustainable economic development
- outcome-based performance measurement

Core Principles

- partnership between all levels of government, the private sector and local citizens
- cost-share program
- incentive-based
- local governance and decision-making through empowered CD boards and sub-districts
- watershed based management and planning with technical capability

CD Vision

CDs are organized on a watershed basis, representative of water and land interests, and supported by strong planning, technical and delivery capabilities through partnerships with governments and the private sector.

CD Mandate

CDs facilitate and support integrated development and stewardship of water and land resources within watersheds, in ways that assure ecosystem health and sustainability through engagement of local citizens.

Strategic Goals of the Conservation Districts Program

Goal 1:

Conservation districts will be formed on watersheds throughout Manitoba.

Objectives:

- CDs align outer boundaries to true watershed boundaries by 2012.
- CDs include all of municipal Manitoba by 2015.

Descriptive attributes:

- There will be approximately 21 CDs in southern Manitoba.
- All CDs are based on watershed boundaries.
- CDs align to boundaries that ensure co-ordinated watershed/basin planning.

Goal 2:

Conservation districts will be governed by local boards that encourage and provide opportunity for citizen consultation and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Objectives:

- The province ensures CD boards and professional staff have access to training and development that helps them build capacity to carry out their mandates.
- All CDs develop policies within two years of formation to direct all aspects of administration, governance, programming and planning.
- Conservation district public engagement processes will include all interests within the watershed.
- The CD Commission will establish a new CD appointment policy by 2009.

Descriptive attributes:

- All local governments should have the opportunity to participate in the CD program.
- Opportunities to fully participate and partner in CD planning and programming should be extended to First Nations and Manitoba Northern Affairs communities to ensure all land including Federal and provincial Crown lands are addressed within the CD mandate, to enable an inclusive and integrated approach across entire watersheds.
- Provincial interests will be represented on CD boards.
- Participation on local CD boards requires financial partnership.

Goal 3:

Conservation districts will complete an integrated watershed management plan (IWMP).

Objectives:

- An IWMP and a five-year strategic plan will be initiated within two years of CD formation.
- All CDs complete a first generation IWMP by 2012.
- First generation IWMPs must assess the current health of the watershed (state of watershed), protect source waters and establish monitoring and evaluation procedures (benchmarking).
- CD planning processes are linked and co-ordinated with planning district processes and plans under *The Planning Act*.
- CD plans serve the objectives of *The Conservation Districts Act*, *The Water Protection Act* and Manitoba's land and water policies.
- Provincial funding will depend on a CD budget that is connected to an IWMP.

Descriptive attributes:

- The purpose of an IWMP is protection, conservation, restoration and stewardship of land and water resources to maintain water quality and support healthy watershed function.
- The plan is not intended to demand additional provincial resources and budgets. Rather, it is intended to establish priorities within existing resources and budgets and to explore new partnerships.
- The provincial planning priority is programming targeted to protect and improve drinking water sources.

Goal 4:

All sources of drinking water within a conservation district are protected.

Objectives:

- Protect drinking water sources through land use management.
- Prevent direct and indirect water pollution.
- Determine priority management zones.

Descriptive attributes:

- Provincial funding priorities are linked to mitigating risk areas identified in an IWMP.

Goal 5:

Conservation districts will have the appropriate authority and responsibility for water management within their watersheds in accordance with provincial policy and legislation.

Objectives:

- CDs are responsible for planning and co-ordinating all surface water management within the watershed.
- The province will work with CD boards on private and municipal water control works licensing.
- All CDs complete a surface water management plan and related policies. The plan addresses security issues including rights of downstream landowners, cumulative effects of land use, flooding, drought, water conservation, drainage and fisheries management.
- CDs prepare and administer a water budget for the watershed.
- All provincial, municipal or private water control works and crossing systems recognize local priorities reflected in a surface water infrastructure management strategy prepared by the CD board (separate from an IWMP).

Descriptive attributes:

- A holistic approach to water management will consider the watershed, ecosystem health and water quality.
- The province supports partnerships and cost-share agreements with CDs for improving and maintaining drainage and crossing infrastructure.
- CD responsibility includes risk management and liability issues.
- Surface water management requires a coordinated approach administered by a watershed authority.

Goal 6:

CD programming will support initiatives that improve and protect aquatic ecosystems.

Objectives:

- CDs assess current and future risks to aquatic ecosystems through integrated watershed management plans.
- CDs govern, manage and plan according to watershed and integrated resource management principles.

Descriptive attributes:

- Aquatic ecosystem protection is fundamental in all CD programming.

Goal 7:

Conservation districts will support sustainable land use and water management through incentive programming.

Objectives:

- CDs work with landowners to promote and support practices that provide public benefits to the watershed (ex: reduced flooding, improved fisheries, enhanced water quality).
- CDs support economic partnerships that use water, land and related resources in sustainable ways.
- CDs are proactive in securing external partnership funding.
- The focus of CDs' land and water programming is prevention.

Descriptive attributes:

- CDs have no regulatory or enforcement mandate.
- Incentive programming is integrative in nature, focused on first barrier preventative and sustainable management practices.
- Incentive programming is targeted to high-risk areas identified and prioritized in an IWMP.

Goal 8:

Conservation district programming will demonstrate measurable improvement to watershed health.

Objectives:

- The Conservation Districts Commission will define appropriate reporting procedures documenting suitable watershed health improvements in 2008.
- CDs monitor and evaluate programming to demonstrate funding which brings measurable improvement to watershed health and water quality.
- The province will assist with technical professional data, indicators, evaluation strategies and processes to assist CDs with monitoring and evaluation.
- The annual budget process includes identifying goals and strategies for measuring progress.
- CDs provide watershed residents with an annual report card on watershed issues, indicators of watershed health and progress toward goals.
- The province defines new funding processes, provincial priorities, cost-sharing and annual CD budget evaluation criteria in 2008.
- Provincial support to CDs is criteria-based with reference to defined provincial priorities, priorities identified in a watershed plan, demonstrated assessments of program effectiveness and equitable considerations.
- Provincial funding is based on measurable change as opposed to the number of projects completed.

Descriptive attributes

- The province seeks to maximize benefit by providing funding when and where it is needed most in each conservation district.
- Watershed population, geographic area and project urgency are all considered in making funding decisions.
- Watershed project proposals that forcast useful and measurable results to watershed health are more likely to be given funding priority.
- The province supports watershed programming targeted to high risk areas identified and prioritized in an IWMP.

Provincial Funding Policy Discussions

Manitoba provides support to the Conservation Districts Program directly through annual grants that are governed by provincial CD funding policy and through technical, administrative and planning support by the province's watershed planning and programs office.

Funding Background

From 1972 to 1987, six variable cost-sharing arrangements were in place, depending on the program. These cost-shares ranged from 90 per cent provincial and 10 per cent municipal to 60 per cent provincial and 40 per cent municipal. A 1987 policy decision changed cost sharing to 75 per cent provincial and 25 per cent municipal for all programming.

Four CDs have responsibility for maintaining provincial waterways and associated crossings. The provincial CD grant includes funds for maintaining the provincial drainage and crossing infrastructure in those four CDs and funds for soil and water programming in all 18 CDs.

Current CD Commission policy endeavours to match funding raised through municipal levies on a three to one basis. Though a desire exists to offer to expand CD programming to all of municipal Manitoba, urban areas, First Nations and federal and provincial Crown lands, Manitoba's potential financial exposure based on current funding policy would not be achievable or sustainable. A realistic, equitable and sustainable provincial funding arrangement needs to be developed.

Provincial Funding Policy Direction

The following statements to guide provincial CD funding policy are proposed for discussion:

a) A new fair and equitable methodology for existing and future conservation districts will be developed to determine the level of the annual provincial grant for land and water programming. This methodology will include provisions for urban areas and recognize the roles population size and geographic area play in the complexity of watershed issues dealt with by conservation districts. (See Appendix A – Conservation Districts Funding Formula and Appendix B – Conservation Districts' Geographical Size and Population Data)

b) The level of provincial annual funding will reflect the amounts approved through the provincial budget process, and will not be based on the amounts CDs raise through their local land assessment levies.

c) Provincial funding will fund projects, programs and activities related to provincial priorities on a three to one basis, up to the total amount approved in the provincial budget. The 75 per cent provincial share is conditional upon the municipal partners providing 25 per cent.

d) Provincial priorities relate to projects, programs and activities directed at:
   - integrated watershed management planning
   - source water protection
   - healthy ecosystems
   - sustainable economic development
   - outcome-based performance measurement

e) Base provincial funding will support CD office operation and administration costs.

f) CDs will have to obtain funding locally or through other external sources for activities and projects that are not provincial priorities.

g) For clarity, assessment and reporting purposes the CD grant may be in three parts:
   - the grant portion for CD office operation and administration costs
   - the grant portion for land and water programming
   - the grant portion for CDs with contracts accepting responsibility for provincial drainage and crossing infrastructure maintenance

Consultation Process

The CD program is a partnership between municipal governments and the Province of Manitoba. For the program to succeed and grow, it must meet the needs of both partners. As such, the partners need to work collaboratively and achieve consensus on the strategic direction of the program.

The process for achieving consensus involves the following steps:

- a framework discussion document be drafted that frames the vision, mission, core principles, provincial priorities, goals and objectives to 2025, developed by the deputy ministers of the CD Commission — principles that will govern a sustainable provincial funding policy will be included
- consultations on the framework discussion document with the Manitoba Conservation Districts Association, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, conservation districts and interested stakeholders
- consensus on the framework discussion document for the CD program projected to 2025

A target of April 2008 has been set for achieving consensus. Once consensus is achieved, a new framework document will be drafted to:

- identify challenges and opportunities in moving the CD program into the future
- identify ways to handle challenges and opportunities
- recommend an action schedule and time frames for completion
- select responsibility centres

The new implementation plan is to be ready for approval by the CD Commission in 2008.

The target is to implement the new strategic framework for the Conservation Districts Program in the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

The province is also inviting comments and input on the proposed principles and considerations for a new funding formula advanced for discussion in this paper.

Conservation Districts Program Framework Summary

CD Vision	CDs are organized on a watershed basis, representative of water and land interests, and supported by strong planning, technical and delivery capabilities through partnerships with governments and the private sector.
CD Mandate	CDs facilitate and support integrated development and stewardship of land and water resources within watersheds, in ways that assure ecosystem health and sustainability through engagement of local citizens.
CD Core Principles	• partnership between all levels of government, the private sector and local citizens • cost-share program • incentive based • local governance and decision-making through empowered CD boards and sub-districts • watershed basin management and planning with technical capability
Provincial Priorities	• integrated watershed management planning • source water protection • healthy ecosystems • sustainable economic development • outcome based performance measurement
Goals and Objectives	Eight goals with performance driving objectives were established. The eight goals support five core CD program principles. The goals and supporting objectives are important for progress toward the five provincial priorities noted above. Each program goal aligns with provincial priorities for the conservation districts. Performance monitoring for measured progress to achieve defined local objectives that are linked to broader provincial goals and priorities. This helps to create alignment between the province and local CD boards.
Overarching Goals and Objectives	**1. Conservation districts will be formed on watersheds throughout Manitoba.** **Objectives:** • CDs align outer boundaries to true watershed boundaries by 2012 • CDs expand to all municipal Manitoba by 2015. **2. Conservation districts will be governed by local boards that encourage and provide opportunity for citizen consultation and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.** **Objectives:** • The province ensures CD boards and professional staff have access to training and development that helps them build capacity to carry out their mandate. • All CDs develop policy within two years of formation to direct all aspects of administration, governance, programming and planning. • Conservation district public engagement processes will include all interests within the watershed. • The CD Commission will establish a new CD appointment policy by 2009.

Conservation Districts Program Framework Summary

Provincial Priorities	◗ integrated watershed management planning	◗ source water protection
Strategic Goals and Objectives	**3. Conservation districts will complete integrated watershed management plans (IWMP).** **Objectives:** • An IWMP and a five-year strategic plan will be initiated within two years of formation. • All CDs complete a first generation IWMP by 2012. • The focus of first generation IWMPs assesses the current health of the watershed (state of watershed), protects source waters and establish monitoring and evaluation procedures (benchmarking). • CD planning processes are linked and co-ordinated with planning district processes and plans under *The Planning Act*. • CD plans serve the objectives of *The Conservation Districts Act*, *The Water Protection Act* and the objectives of Manitoba's land and water policies.	**4. All sources of drinking water within a conservation district are protected.** **Objectives:** • Protect drinking water sources through land use management. • Prevent direct and indirect water pollution. • Determine priority management zones **5. Conservation districts will have the appropriate authority and responsibility for water management within their watersheds in accordance with provincial policy and legislation.** **Objectives:** • CDs are responsible for planning and co-ordinating all surface water management within the watershed. • The province will work with CD boards on private and municipal water control works licensing. • All CDs complete a surface water management plan and related policies. The plan addresses security issues including rights of downstream landowners, cumulative effects of land use, flooding, drought, water conservation, drainage and fisheries management. • CDs prepare and administer a water budget for the watershed. • All provincial, municipal or private water control works and crossing systems recognize local priorities reflected in a surface water infrastructure management strategy prepared by the CD board (separate from an IWMP).
Reporting Data	• state of watershed report • annual report card • source water protection plan	• annual report card • infrastructure plan • surface water plan

◗ healthy ecosystems	◗ sustainable economic development	◗ outcome based performance measurement
6. CD programming will support initiatives that improve and protect aquatic ecosystems. **Objectives:** • CDs assess current and future risks to aquatic ecosystems through IWMPs. • CDs govern, manage and plan according to watershed and integrated resource management principles.	**7. Conservation districts will support sustainable land use and water management through incentive programming.** **Objectives:** • CDs work with landowners to promote and support practices that provide public benefits to the watershed (ex: reduced flooding, enhanced water quality). • CDs support economic partnerships that use water, land and related resources in sustainable ways. • CDs are proactive in securing external partnership funding. • The focus of CDs' land and water programming is prevention.	**8. Conservation district programming will demonstrate measurable improvement to watershed health.** **Objectives:** • CD Commission will define appropriate reporting procedures documenting suitable watershed health improvements by 2008. • CDs monitor and evaluate programming to demonstrate funding which brings measurable improvement to watershed health and water quality. • The province will assist with technical professional data, indicators, evaluation strategies and processes to assist CDs with monitoring and evaluation. • The annual budget process includes identifying goals and strategies for measuring progress. • CDs provide watershed residents with an annual report card on watershed issues, indicators of watershed health and progress toward goals. • The province defines new funding processes, provincial priorities, cost-sharing and annual CD budget evaluation criteria by 2008. • Provincial support to CDs is criteria-based with reference to defined provincial priorities, priorities identified in a watershed plan, demonstrated assessments of program effectiveness and equitable considerations. • Provincial funding is based on measurable change as opposed to the number of projects completed.
• identify/map risk areas • annual report card	• IWMP	• justification based budgeting • annual report card • watershed health report

Conservation Districts Funding Formula
A suggested approach

$$\frac{\text{GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF CD}}{\text{TOTAL AREA FOR ALL CDS}} \times 100 = A$$

% OF TOTAL AREA FOR ALL CDS

$$\frac{\text{CD POPULATION POINTS}}{\text{TOTAL POPULATION POINTS FOR ALL CDS}} \times 100 = B$$

% OF TOTAL POP. POINTS FOR ALL CDS

$$\text{ANNUAL PROVINCIAL CD GRANT} - [\,\text{\# OF CDS X 78.0}^{*}\,] = \text{ANNUAL \$ AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS}^{\dagger}$$

$$\text{ANNUAL \$ AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS} - [\,\text{DRAINAGE \& CROSSING INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE}\,] = \text{ANNUAL \$ AVAILABLE FOR LAND \& WATER PROGRAMMING}$$

ANNUAL INDIVIDUAL CD GRANT

$$\left[\left[\frac{A + B}{200}\right] \times \text{ANNUAL \$ AVAILABLE FOR LAND \& WATER PROGRAMMING}\right] + \$78.0^{*} + \text{DRAINAGE \& CROSSING INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE}$$

Please note: this funding formula is only a suggested approach. It is a starting point for discussions about developing a funding format that is fair and equitable for all.

* $78.0 = $78,000 base CD operational and administrative provincial grant
For the 2007—2008 fiscal year:
$4.835 million - Total CD provincial grant
$2.015 million - Annual funding available for land and water programs
$1.300 million - Annual funding available for provincial drainage and crossing infrastructure

† Reduce by $116 thousand for CD expansion in the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

Conservation Districts' Geographic Area and Population Data[1]

Conservation Districts	Geographic area of CD	Percentage of Total Area for All CDs	Population	Points per person 1 to 5,000[2]	Points per person between 5,000 to 10,000[2]	Points per person between 10,000 to 20,000[2]	Points per person above 20,000[2]	Population Points	Percentage of Population Points for all CDs	Sum of Geographic and Population Points	Infrastructure Portion of Grant (in thousands)
				3	1	.5	.2				
Alonsa	4,450	5.8%	2,300	6,900	0	0	0	6,900	2.0%	7.88%	$200
Assiniboine Hills [3]	5,720	7.5%	14,670	15,000	5,000	2,335	0	22,335	6.6%	14.11%	
Cooks Creek	862	1.1%	13,500	15,000	5,000	1,750	0	21,750	6.4%	7.57%	$240
East Interlake	6,894	9.0%	28,000	15,000	5,000	5,000	1,600	26,600	7.9%	16.91%	
Intermountain	7,200	9.4%	16,348	15,000	5,000	3,174	0	23,174	6.9%	16.30%	
Kelsey	900	1.2%	2,500	7,500	0	0	0	7,500	2.2%	3.40%	
Lake of the Prairies	2,193	2.9%	6,731	15,000	1,731	0	0	16,731	5.0%	7.83%	
La Salle Redboine	7,000	9.2%	37,000	15,000	5,000	5,000	3,400	28,400	8.4%	17.58%	
Little Saskatchewan River	3,127	4.1%	8,602	15,000	3,602	0	0	18,602	5.5%	9.61%	
Pembina Valley	5,061	6.6%	20,529	15,000	5,000	5,000	106	25,106	7.4%	14.07%	
Seine-Rat River	3,732	4.9%	46,600	15,000	5,000	5,000	5,320	30,320	9.0%	13.87%	
Swan Lake Watershed	4,234	5.6%	10,100	15,000	5,000	50	0	20,050	5.9%	11.49%	
Turtle Mountain	4,518	5.9%	9,062	15,000	4,062	0	0	19,062	5.6%	11.57%	
Turtle River Watershed	2,331	3.1%	4,000	12,000	0	0	0	12,000	3.6%	6.61%	$310
Upper Assiniboine River	6,722	8.8%	10,439	15,000	5,000	220	0	20,220	6.0%	14.80%	
West Souris River	4,208	5.5%	5,609	15,000	609	0	0	15,609	4.6%	10.14%	
Whitemud Watershed	7,130	9.3%	16,857	15,000	5,000	3,429	0	23,429	6.9%	16.28%	$550
Totals	**76,282**	**100.0%**	**252,847**	**236,400**	**60,004**	**30,957**	**10,426**	**337,787**	**100.0%**	**200.00%**	**$1,300**

1 Data provided by conservation districts is for informational purposes only

2 The variable point awarded for population is as follows:

- 3 points per person from 1 to 5000 people, plus
- 1 point per person between 5,000 and 10,000 people, plus
- .5 points per person between 10,000 and 20,000 people, plus
- .2 points per person above 20,000 people.

3 In the 2008-2009 fiscal year the Mid-Assiniboine Conservation District and the Tiger Hills Conservation District will merge to become the Assiniboine Hills Conservation District

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For more information
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